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## TWO CONGRESSES CONTRASTED.

BY EX-SPEAKER REED.

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WHENEVER an army is like the famous army of Xerxes, essentially barbaric, it matters not how far the ranks stretch across the field of vision, or how far off on the horizon's edge they pass glittering out of sight. They are useless alike for conquest or for slaughter. The numbers only emphasize the failure. They hasten its downfall, and serve only to astonish children in story books that so many could be conquered by so few. Wherever discipline or unity of purpose is lacking, numbers may be one of the elements of disaster. No army can fight the enemy if it must at the same time fight itself.

When the House of Representatives of the Fifty-second Congress met, it met as a mob, and has kept up that interesting form of organization ever since. Of course, the Republican leaders could have driven the enemy into compact shape, covered them with reproaches, forced them to train, and otherwise have made an army of them. Then there would have been much glory won by the said leaders among the unthinking, but the exhibition would have been lost to the world of Democracy, as it really is a hopeless assortment of discordant differences, as incapable of positive action as it is capable of infinite clamor.

As the American people are about to enter upon the great Presidential struggle of 1892, in which is involved not merely the Chief Magistrate of the country and his possible successor, not merely the Senate and House of Representatives, but all the legislation and the progress of the United States for at least four years, it may be well to see what has been the result of a Democratic House, powerful beyond any in our history, capable of overwhelming their opponents by the terrible vote of three to one. Surely such a House ought to have been an example of

what an ideal Democratic House would be, for they had only to settle within the bosom of their own party what they would do, and their vast majority enabled them to act without the slightest heed to the small minority the people had seen fit to send to represent the principles which at the last Presidential election had been in pitched battle victorious over all. With such a majority we had a right to expect some display of those principles which enable a man to say "I am a Democrat," and still think himself decent. But if we did entertain such expectations they have all vanished, and in the heat of the summer sun we watch the perspiring Democratic patriot engaged in the only work his House of Representatives has ever undertaken, the work of trying to find a day of adjournment, which, when it comes, will again land him on the stump with principles to let suitable to each locality, and hampered by no deed done or policy established; the same old Democratic maverick never branded until the day of sale and not even then indelibly.

When the House met, we all naturally expected that the man who represented the latest phase of Democracy,—which is called "Tariff Reform" by the judicious and "Free Trade" by the courageous,—Mr. Mills, the Representative from Texas, then supposed to be the embodiment of Democracy, would be chosen to represent the party of which he had been the mouthpiece for years. But the tendency of Democracy towards chaos was irresistible. The determination of the leaders that the party should enter the next contest unencumbered by principles pushed Mr. Mills to the wall, and gave the place to Mr. Crisp, of Georgia, whose superiority over Mr. Mills in evenness of temper has not been so marked as we had all hoped.

The rest of the organization was made in furtherance of this plan of non-committalism. Mr. Springer was placed at the head of the Committee of Ways and Means instead of Mr. Mills, who, by all usage, was entitled to it, and to whom it could not have been refused unless the party had come to a determination to announce a change of policy from straightforward tariff reform, a remedy as broad as the alleged disease, to a piecemeal work which would declare no policy and leave the future to everybody's hopes. Mr. Springer was, under these circumstances, very appropriately placed at the head of the committee. While Mr. Springer has at all times formed and expressed a great variety of opinions on a

great variety of subjects, he has never been by his friends or his enemies regarded as in the least degree bigoted. History has justified the confidence which the Democracy have in Mr. Springer. He has been a Democrat. The party can contemplate his work of this session with the calm certainty that there is no intellect so subtle, no mind so broad, no sympathy so delicate, as to detect therein the slightest trace of a principle of economic science or a system of revenue ; and the Democracy certainly do enter the next campaign unembarrassed by their immediate past, and with great power of being natural, that is, of being all things to all men.

All this is, undoubtedly, shrewd political management, but at the expense of all that is manly, open, and fair. Mr. Mills and Mr. Carlisle managed far otherwise. They laid before the people of the United States their example of tariff reform and manfully hung out their ensign, and did open and generous battle. If they were conquered, they at least knew that the people did their work with eyes open, knowing what they did. Tariff reform may mean all sorts of things. Under the leadership of Mills and Carlisle the Democracy proclaimed what they meant. The Democracy of this Congress, under Mr. Springer, have been trying in all ways to keep from the people what they mean, and propose to fight the next battle without any flag and from an ambushade.

The Democracy in the House, with a force of three to one, have not only done nothing with the tariff, but they have done nothing with anything else ; not only have they done nothing, but at the very beginning they deliberately established a system of rules which made it a foregone conclusion that not only had the leaders abdicated, but they were determined that nobody else should reign. Given a wonderful power by the people, a power which might have enabled them to carry out any plan for the relief of what they called the down-trodden people, they deliberately put the veto into the hands of one-third, and in most cases into the hands of less, and relapsed into imbecility. Not one measure above the dignity of rye straw will mark the annals of the House of Representatives of the Fifty-second Congress. In history it will present all the dead level of a Dutch landscape with all its wind-mills, but without a trace of its beauty and fertility. The only picturesque object which will break the sky line will be Mr. Holman draped as a statue of Economy, standing on the railroad-crowned

summit of the Lawrenceburg embankment trying in vain with a spy-glass to find any trace of the river the embankment was intended to confine. Indiana, however, and the appropriation will be in full view.

When this House met great hopes were entertained that strict economy would reign. The man whose reputation was the highest was placed at the head of the Committee on Appropriations, and the great duty of reducing to an honest level all the expenditures of the government was entered upon. Mr. Holman, the great high priest of the new dispensation, disappeared from mortal view for many days, and finally reappeared with a calm, stately, and beautiful self-denying resolution proclaiming the principles of honesty, just as though they had been newly discovered, and were, for the first time in the history of the world, to be put into practice. It was a solemn moment. Everybody felt that the high-water mark of human virtue had been reached, and, under the awe-inspiring impressions of that day, they were treated as scoffers who suggested that after high water came the ebb. I hate to tell the sequel; but, alas, the scoffers were right. Never since that hour have the Democracy looked so grand, gloomy, and peculiar as on that Pentecostal day when the Holman proclamation of economic virtue was administered to them, and they resolved how bad others had been, and how good they themselves would be. It is sad to be obliged to add that now, after the results have been reached, we find that the squandering Republicans appropriated 463 millions at the first session of the "Billion Congress," while the economic Democrats have appropriated over 500 millions at the first session of a Congress that certainly can never be called a "Nickel Congress." Would it be in the nature of insult to the fallen to propose to the Honorable Mr. Holman of Indiana a sum in the rule of three? If the expenditure of 463 millions made us of the Fifty-first Congress "rascals," what precise epithet would do justice to those who have appropriated 500 millions? It really begins to look as if this country was too big to be measured in some half-bushels.

There have been two reports of the Committee on Elections, one in favor of the Democrat and the other in favor of the Republican. The House indorsed and sustained its committee in unseating the Republican, while it rose above party, voted down

its own partizan committee and kept in its place Democratic Mr. Rockwell, probably believing that the declaration "I am a Democrat" is in the United States, as it is in New York, a better certificate of election than the votes of the people.

On this action of the House, deliberately and for partisan purposes overruling the deliberate judgment of its own committee, and seating the Democrat without even a vestige of right, by sheer force of numbers, there has been no comment by Democratic newspapers and very little by our own. Had such an outrage been possible in a House Republican three to one, the air would have been burdened with outcries from March to the day of the election. Whenever the Democracy steal a seat in Congress or even a State nobody minds it. It is no use to talk about it. It is like saying a fish swims, or a horse runs, or a cat likes cream. It must be a tremendous rest to be a Democrat.

Contrast with this picture of a House overwhelmingly Democratic a picture, the truthfulness of which no man can dispute, of the House of Representatives of the Fifty-first Congress, and mark the surprising difference. When that House was adjourned, amid defeat and disaster, I ventured the assertion that the day would come when every man who belonged to the majority, and not a few of the minority, would be proud to have belonged to that goodly company. I confess that I thought of a very distant day after many years of fight and storm and stress. But two years only have elapsed. Not only have Democratic outcries ceased and Democratic clamor subsided, but the best men even of that party are looking forward to the reestablishment of the rules of that House as the sound basis of business action in conformity with the Constitution of the United States. It would seem as if the time had come for a candid review of the years 1890 and 1891.

The first duty of any legislative body is to examine its own membership, to unseat those wrongfully present, and to seat those whom the people have chosen. This duty is of the very essence of free government. In the Fifty-first Congress the Committee on Elections, composed of men of irreproachable character on the one side as well as the other, made seventeen reports, of which nine were in favor of Republicans, seven in favor of Democrats, and one in favor of a Democrat who was chosen by the Farmers' Alliance. In the cases which were reached the House sustained the Committee and passed upon thirteen cases. Four

cases, those of two Republicans and two Democrats, were not passed upon. These figures themselves, on the face of them, show a fairness and justice which the examination of each case in detail will entirely justify. The results of this committee's action can safely challenge comparison with that of any committee since the first Congress convened.

When the Congress met its plain duty after determining its membership was to legislate. Affairs had been approaching a crisis ever since the last Republican Congress adjourned in 1883; public business of the most urgent kind had so accumulated and so pressed upon the government that it absolutely had to be transacted. There were great public questions upon which there could no longer be refused a decision. A rapidly-growing surplus was not only disarranging our finances, but was inviting, with irresistible power, large and constantly increasing expenditures. In order to increase the leverage of this surplus the Democrats had refused to pay the honest debts of the country, and, although a majority of themselves were in favor of it, had refused to refund the direct tax paid by the loyal States and refused by the disloyal South. The tariff demanded revision; international copyright demanded adjustment; our merchant marine demanded encouragement; and the people demanded relief from over-taxation on items which, like sugar, could not be produced here in full supply, and on which all that was paid was a mere tax paid without any hope of that ulterior benefit which comes from the protection of an industry which can fully supply all wants.

The World's Fair had to be arranged for. Oklahoma needed to be made a Territory and placed under safe and salutary laws. Wyoming and Idaho were pressing to be admitted as States. A new Congressional Apportionment Act had to be passed. The land laws needed revising. The State Agricultural colleges needed to be placed on a better basis. In the interest of our export trade meat and cattle inspection required immediate attention. The silver question, owing to the neglect of our financiers, and the strenuous exertions of the friends of free coinage, had assumed such an importance in the eyes of the people that it was no longer in the power of the Congress to refuse action. The decision of the Supreme Court as to the original-package question had so interfered with local self-government that the States had to be reclothed with power to control their affairs. Indian reservations

needed to be opened. Indian debts and French spoliation claims, both shamefully neglected, needed to be paid, and the action of the Maritime Conference demanded ratification. The great questions of service and disability pensions could no longer be neglected, and had to be fully and satisfactorily discussed and treated. Measures had also to be taken to suppress the Louisiana Lottery—legislation which was called for against an institution established under the constitution of a Democratic State, but which spread its baleful influences over the whole Union, and had to be dealt with by Federal law.

There were many smaller matters important for each locality, and for that locality just as important as the great national questions to which I have referred. This accumulation of business had been the result of a series of Democratic Houses from 1883 to 1889. The business of eight years had to be done in two. The three Democratic Houses which preceded us were as inefficient as our successor. No sooner was the House called to order than it became clear to any man of sense that the first question was not what business should be done, but whether any business should be done at all.

The Democracy were very confident. For fifty years they and their kind had been building up against the will of the people barriers so complicated, so diverse, so numerous, and so closely interwoven with the prejudices and customs of many generations that the Citadel of Do Nothing seemed unapproachable from sea or shore. The veto power of the minority, enhanced at every opportunity by the decisions of Democratic Speakers, was something of which the nation had no conception, and such as was never tolerated in any other legislative body. Obstructions of the will of the people had even become the plaything of any angry hour.

Unless the House could be emancipated from the bad traditions of fifty years there was no hope of legislation, and all the fierce contests by which a Republican President had been elected and a Republican House had been installed would have been fought in vain. But fortunately for the country the House was strong enough to meet its duties, and, amid shouts and outcries which already seem strange and incomprehensible, broke down the barriers of custom and reestablished the right of the majority to rule. This was its greatest achievement, for which it will have a name in history.



Having thus assumed the reins of power, the majority became responsible for what was done. They became responsible for the Act of 1890 relating to the purchase of silver. Whether that act, isolated from all the circumstances of 1890, was absolutely wise is more than I know. That it then and there saved this country from the free coinage for which every Democratic leader was then clamoring, and on which they are now so silent, I do know. If time shall show that it ought to be repealed, that will in no wise militate against the wisdom of passing it in 1890. They became responsible for the refunding of the direct tax, a just measure, which, among other things, saved from bankruptcy the State of Kentucky, most, if not all, of whose Representatives voted against it.

They became responsible for that latest revision of the tariff, which is just now rising so high above the slanders which two years ago poured upon it as if the foundation of the great deep had been broken up. Free sugar, larger exports and larger imports are fully justifying the bill, and increased manufacturing results will soon add their quota to the returning prosperity of the country.

They became responsible also for the meat and cattle inspection, which took away from foreign nations their last excuse for refusing to receive our food products, and enabled our able Secretary of Agriculture and our foreign ministers to restore to us in some measure the markets of the world for such products.

They became responsible for the destruction of the Louisiana Lottery. They redeemed the honor of the United States by making provision to pay its honest debts. They opened up to actual settlement many million acres of productive lands, and gave a suitable form of government to vast areas of the territory of the United States.

They became responsible for pension laws which the Democratic House has not dared to assail, and which, however much they may be covertly complained of, were but the assurance of the nation that the soldiers of the war and their dependents might be forever sure that the bounty of the nation, which it was honorable for them to receive, should stand between them and that taint of dishonor which, whether justly or unjustly, has always attached itself to local and parochial charity.

But it is not necessary to again enumerate the acts passed

by the Fifty-first Congress. The catalogue already given of duties pressing upon the Congress at its commencement is also a catalogue of duties done. The House of Representatives of the Fifty-first Congress met every responsibility without exception, and gave the judgment of the representatives of the people upon all the questions which the people put before them.

That all this work was accomplished at any time under most favorable circumstances would have been a great achievement, but that it was accomplished, and so well accomplished, under the fiercest opposition that ever existed in any legislative body, is a tribute alike to the soundness of the rules of the House and the unfaltering courage of its majority. After the lapse of only two years the fierce fire of reproach and clamor has all died away, and out of the mouths of its most strenuous opponents its praises are perfected.

The Supreme Court of the United States has followed the judgment of every other tribunal that ever passed upon the question, and pronounced with the same unanimity which characterized the others that a "present quorum" is the only quorum contemplated by the Constitution of the United States. No fatuous action of any majority, however large or however foolish, can ever again be shielded by any claim of the lack of power. The right of the majority to rule has been established as our fathers understood it, and can never again be abdicated. If autocratic power is again given to minorities, the majority cannot escape responsibility. It is true that the present House has refused its privileges, and shirked its duties, and led a gelatinous life, to the scorn of all vertebrate animals; nevertheless the example once set of a House of Representatives doing all the work put before it, and emerging in two short years from a deluge of reproach, with its actions justified by events and its method of action justified by the highest tribunal known to our law, can never be lost to the future of this country.

With the single exception of the tariff act, which is the subject of partisan attack, every act passed by the Fifty-first Congress has remained unassailed by even a Democratic House, and the long list of acts which though done in two years, were really the business of more than eight years, now stand, with a single exception, approved by the silence of an opposition which was wildly and rampantly vociferous when these acts were passed.

Look over the list of legislative acts for 1890 and 1891. Compare them in intrinsic importance with those passed by any Congress of the century, and you will find no rival list except that enacted by the first Congress of the war, when considerations taking hold of the very existence of the nation had silenced opposition, and left patriotism unobstructed.

Our reputation, the reputation of the Fifty-first Congress, for wisdom has been vindicated by the permanence of our laws. Our reputation for the economical appropriation of the public funds in the interest of the people has been more than vindicated by the appropriation of 40 millions in addition to what we expended—an appropriation made by the very boasters who reviled us so triumphantly while they were putting on the harness. Mr. Holman now understands as never before the wisdom of that scripture, which says: “Let not him that putteth on the harness boast like him that putteth it off.”

Surely the verdict of history, the only verdict worth having, is doubly delightful when it comes thus swiftly and to living men.

THOMAS B. REED.